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Moment in GSU History: “Building Jarred,” 1949

Posted on August 2, 2013 by [William Hardesty](#)



Collapsed building at 6 Ivy Street (Peachtree Center) with the Hurt Building across the street. (LBGPNS6-034a)

In 1949, the Atlanta Division of the University of Georgia—precursor to Georgia State University—fit all of its students, staff, classrooms and offices into two floors of one building. On the afternoon of March 24th of that year, the whole building, now known as Kell Hall, shook when another structure collapsed just up the block.



Kell Hall in 1945, when it was still the Ivy Street Garage. Its distinctive cornice is visible in the other photos. (G1973-5_235)

Using resources in the University Library, its Special Collections and Archives, and its Digital Collections, we can learn a surprising amount about the incident and about GSU in those days. [Dr. Merl Reed's *Educating the Urban New South*](#) (2009) explains how the school obtained the building at 24 Ivy Street, S.E. (later Peachtree Center) and occupied it in 1946, renting the other 4 floors to tenants. According to a 1948-1949 [Atlanta city directory](#), other occupants of the Bolling Jones Building (as it was called until 1964) included the Board of Regents as well as the archives department of Southern Bell

Telephone and a cotton brokerage's "sample rooms." The building that collapsed contained the United Wholesale Grocery Company. The directories confirm newspaper accounts that the structure was built as a corner gas station, whose overhanging second floor fell during excavation on the street.

AD Building Jarred As Warehouse Falls

Personnel of the Atlanta Division office dropped what they were doing and ran to take a "look-see" during registration March 24, when a two-story building at 6 Ivy St. collapsed.

The building, located two doors from the Atlanta Division, collapsed at 1:20 p. m., scattering canned fruits and vegetables and debris over the street.

Occupied by United Groceries Co., the building was said by spectators to have settled slowly without much noise but jarred buildings in the area considerably.

From the Atlanta Division of the University of Georgia's University Signal, April 8, 1949, p. 6.

The University Signal's coverage of the event is in the Library's [Digital Collections](#), which also contain highlights from Special Collections and Archives' extensive photographic collection. The image of the collapse was made on the day it occurred by the [Lane Brothers Commercial Photographers](#) company, commissioned by a law firm that was involved in the subsequent suit over the damage. Comparing it with a [GSU Archives](#) image of the Bolling Jones Building and a 1946 aerial view from the [Atlanta Journal-Constitution Photographic Archive](#), also in the Digital Collections, makes clear how close this catastrophe was to the University's home. Detailed information about the

lots in the area is also available on the Sanborn maps for Atlanta (which show that, by 1952, a parking lot was at 6 Ivy Street).

Both GSU and Atlanta have grown significantly since 1949, when the university's facilities consisted of two floors in an office building near a grocery warehouse. Today, the Arts & Humanities Building stands on the site of the collapse.



Aerial view of the Hurt Park area in 1946 (detail). The warehouse that would collapse is across from the Hurt Building and Kell Hall is at lower left. Atlanta's major concert and event hall, Municipal Auditorium (now Dahlberg Hall), is just visible on the lower right at the opposite end of the park. (AJCNS1946-00-01c)

For more on GSU history, consult [*Merl Reed, Educating the New Urban South: Atlanta and the Rise of Georgia State University, 1913-1969*](#) (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2009) and the GSU Archives' [University History Research Guide](#). The project to digitize the GSU Signal is ongoing, and issues from 1931 into the late 1970s are

